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ABSTRACT

The two-part paper describes the PASS (Program Analysis of Service Service Systems) evaluation method and its use in assessing a local school district federally funded project for mainstreaming elementary-level handicapped children. It is explained that PASS is an approach based on normalization and accountability principles applicable to a variety of educational, habilitational, residential, supportive, recreational and corrective settings. The second paper details how school personnel in Park Forest, Illinois used the PASS evaluation to modify program efforts. Reported are seven major strengths and weaknesses identified through the PASS approach, including the need for more precise prescriptive planning and teaching on the part of resource specialists. (Author/CL)

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EVALUATING SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS: USING PASS (PROGRAM ANALYSIS OF SERVICE SYSTEMS) TO ASSESS A DISTRICT'S MAINSTREAMING PROJECT

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ABSTRACT: This two part paper describes the PASS (Program Analysis of Service Systems; Wolfensberger & Glenn, 1975) evaluation method, and its use to evaluate a local school district/federally funded mainstreaming project. PASS is an evaluation approach based on normalization and sound administrative practice which has been used extensively to evaluate community service programs. In the second paper here, its relevance to special education program evaluation is demonstrated.

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PART ONE: AN OVERVIEW OF PASS (PROGRAM ANALYSIS OF SERVICE SYSTEMS)

Michael F. Hogan

The advent of accountability in human services, coupled with demands for less restrictive and higher quality programs, raises many problems for administrators. One chief problem is how to evaluate programs. Most evaluation research techniques, if not complex and esoteric, appear that way to practitioners. And there is a shortage of relevant responsive evaluation systems and approaches.

PASS (Wolfensberger & Glenn, 1975) is an evaluation system with the potential to assist administrators in determining program quality. According to these authors, "PASS is a unique device which applies universal human service principles in objectively quantifying the quality of a wide range of human service projects, systems, and agencies (Wolfensberger & Glenn, 1975b, p. 3)." The purposes of PASS may be summarized as follows:

TABLE 1

PASS PURPOSES

1) Evaluation of quality of existing & proposes services
   a) adherence to normalization principles
   b) adherence to other adaptive universals
   c) comparison of services:
      I. that differ in type
      II. that differ across time
2) Teach
   a) normalization principles
   b) other desirable program ideologies and practices

3) Define what constitutes adequacy of service treatment

4) Provide means to improve, eliminate, or replace poor, inappropriate, insufficient programs & personnel

5) Aid in planning & location of new services.

Although originally developed to assess the quality of community programs for persons labelled retarded, PASS has been used in a wide range of human service areas, as indicated in Table 2.

TABLE 2

APPLICABILITY OF PASS

Types of services	Service recipients (labels
Educational	Physical disability
Early education	Perceptual handicap
Special schools, classes, programs	Mental retardation
Adult education, training	Emotional disturbance
Habilitational	Substance abuse
Study-work programs	Delinquency
Vocational training	Aging
Sheltered employment	
Work/training stations	
Residential	
Foster/boarding homes	
Supervised apartments	
Group residences	
Nursing homes	
Institutions	
Supportive	
Family support	
Counselling, diagnosis	
Placement	
Protective, Citizen Advocacy	
Recreational	
Camps, clubs	
Corrective	
Reformatories, jails (not detentive)	

PASS is applicable to this wide range of services and diverse set of conditions because it evaluates universal human service issues (e.g. accessibility, cost-beneficiality, program intensity). Fifty such issues are examined by PASS; these are termed "ratings". Each rating contains a definition of the issue involved, and examples of typical service functioning with respect to that issue. (It should be noted that PASS is published as a two-volume set by the National Institute on Mental Retardation, 4700 Keele St., Toronto. The first volume or Handbook contains general background information. The second volume, or Field Manual, contains all of the ratings.)

Each rating is divided into 3 to 6 "levels" of quality. The highest level is reserved for best possible performance, for example "Consumer and Public Participation" which could not possibly be improved. The lowest level is assigned when performance on the rating is so bad as to seriously affect overall program quality. The middle ratings are a range from inadequate to good performance.

Each rating is assigned points based on its importance and prominence as a human service issue. The highest level of each rating receives the maximum points for that issue, and typically the lowest rating receives the same number of negative points. The highest possible score (top level for all ratings) on PASS is 1,000. A score of zero (middling performance on each rating) is assigned for acceptable agency performance. A recent analysis of over 100 PASS evaluations (Flynn, 1975) found average performance to be 229 points, or just over "acceptable."

PASS is applied to service projects by teams of trained "raters". These evaluators have typically learned the system by attending a five day training session and participating as learners in several evaluations. Since PASS requires skilled judgements on complex human service issues, human service experience and familiarity with evaluation in general are also prerequisites for "raters". A typical agency evaluation team would have about 7 members, half of whom would be experienced in the specific service type being evaluated, and half experienced in other areas. At least one person familiar with local conditions would be on the team , and several students should be included for learning purposes. There would be one individual designated as "Team Leader" with overall responsibility for the evaluation. Finally, one person on the team might be designated as editor of the PASS evaluation report, unless this responsibility was to be shared by all members and the leader.

A full scale evaluation of a medium sized program (e.g. a special school with a dozen classes) would require about two days of data collection by the team. Of this time a full day would be spent at the site, where the team would interview project administration, visit all program areas for observations, inspect clinical and program records and planning and budget materials, and talk with staff, consumers, and visitors. The team would also tour the surrounding area. Before arriving at the site, the team would have surveyed all available written information on the program and defined data collection responsibilities.

After gathering data on all aspects of service functioning, the PASS team members individually "rate" the project, assigning levels to each rating. The team then goes through a lengthy "conciliation" session, attempting to reach team consensus on correct levels. During this session, the team would also define major and minor issues confronting the service, and identify specific recommendations for improvement. Responsibilities for the final evaluation report would also be assigned at this time. The PASS evaluation is not complete until the completed report is returned to the service, and program administrators have had a chance to discuss findings with evaluation team representatives.

Focussing as it does on broad and universal human service issues, PASS is an excellent tool to use in assessing innovative programs, particularly those based upon new human service values or ideologies. "Mainstreaming" programs in special education are one such example. The mainstreaming concept is based on the normalization principle (Wolfensberger, 1972) in many ways. There is an emphasis on using less restrictive and more normative program alternatives, and on removing stigmatizing labels and settings.

Preliminary experience with mainstreaming has been very mixed. While the concept has brought attention to the problem of segregated options for mildly handicapped children, it has also served as a rationale for "dumping" handicapped children in typical settings with little support. The second half of this paper describes a federally funded mainstreaming project, and how the PASS system was applied to evaluate this new approach.

The paper, written by a school administrator, details how school personnel utilized the evaluation to modify several program areas. The paper also identifies several areas in which PASS assessment pointed to weaknesses in implementation of the mainstreaming concept. These would include reliance on the resource room approach alone, as opposed to a broad spectrum of service alternatives. As is noted in the paper, school personnel decided this "single-path" solution was the best available, given limited resources. The paper thus illustrates how a broad evaluation approach such as PASS may determine program strengths and weaknesses which would otherwise be taken for granted.

Accountability in human services depends on a willingness to scrutinize programs and the availability of evaluation technology. The PASS evaluation system is one such technology, and special educators such as those in Park Forest are demonstrating a commitment to evaluation and accountability. The combination of commitment and competence is an essential one in human services today.

Part Two

The PASS evaluation of the Park Forest Mainstreaming Project: An administrators' reaction.

Jean C. Bernstein

Last year School District 163 in Park Forest participated in a PASS evaluation of our special education programs. To provide a context in which to share with you our experiences with PASS, let me first describe our district and our students.

Park Forest is located approximately 30 miles south of Chicago. School District 163 comprises the major part of Park Forest and the Beacon Hill-Forest Heights section of Chicago Heights. We presently have 3,300 students in the K-8 grades. Our students come from diverse backgrounds--one-third of our student body is minority, one out of every six students qualifies for our free lunch program. We have a normal population of learners--some are confident and problem free while others are problem laden and insecure.

As a district, we have gone through dramatic changes in the past four years. In September of 1972 our schools were desegregated on a racial balance basis with two way bussing of students between the black and white communities within our district. Desegregation provided an opportunity for re-examination of our educational programs. When we looked at special education, we did not like what we saw. Although children with speech and learning disabilities had since the inception of programs in these areas been maintained in regular classrooms, students classified as "mentally impaired" or "behaviorally disordered" were segregated in special classes. We had no evidence that these students were benefitting either academically or socially from this placement. Our observations seemed to indicate that some of them were falling further behind with each year of isolation. Moreover, we found our special education classes to be disproportionately minority.

We began in September of 1973 to phase out our self-contained special education classes. Students in these classes were placed in regular classes and the special education rooms were converted to resource room facilities where teacher specialists could team to provide supportive services to students with

learning or behavioral problems. Five schools were involved in this phase-out process during the 1973-74 school year. When we proposed to extend the process to three additional schools the next year, a wave of opposition to "mainstreaming" swept through these school neighborhoods. Teachers and parents opposed the inclusion of children with special education problems in the regular classroom. Many of them saw these children as severely subnormal, believed they would be unable to participate in the normal program and feared their presence in the classroom would disrupt the learning atmosphere and prevent other more normal children from learning.

It is apparent that something had to be done to help teachers and parents adjust to "mainstreaming." We developed a proposal for funds through Title III-ESEA, Section 306 and this proposal was funded for the 1974-75 school year as Project Mainstream. Project Mainstream had two major objectives: to provide additional staff services for a new program for three-to-five year old handicapped children which the district was beginning; to provide supportive services to facilitate the mainstreaming of special education students in the K-8 grades. Under the second objective, we undertook a wide variety of inservice programs for both classroom teachers and resource room specialists.

The PASS assessment of our resource room program was part of the evaluation of Project Mainstream. A team of PASS evaluators visited our district from April 20 through April 23, 1976. I must admit that we were somewhat apprehensive before the arrival of the PASS team. No new program is problem free and we were aware of many problems we were having in developing a smoothly functioning resource room program. It is a tribute to the quality of the team that our fears were allayed upon our first meeting with the team members. We found them to be competent and caring. They too wanted the best for our district children.

How did PASS report help our district? In order to answer that question, I must briefly review the content of the evaluation. The report was divided into

three parts: Total Pass Score Results, Major Strengths and Weaknesses, Other Considerations. The middle section, Major Strengths and Weaknesses, was the most useful part of the report from our viewpoint. The PASS evaluators noted these points:

1. Many district staff members had an unclear or incomplete understanding of the philosophy of normalization as it related to the resource room program.
2. The single model approach, the resource room program, in which the district had invested all its energy did not offer a wide enough spectrum of options to meet the needs of all students with special education problems.
3. The use of state special education terms--learning disabled, mentally impaired, behaviorally disordered--in the diagnosis of student problems and the classification of children for service created negative labelling of children.
4. The voluntary nature of many of the district's inservice activities warranted review; the district needed to decide which activities should be mandatory for all staff and to assume a more agressive role in requiring attendance at these activities.
5. More precise methodologies needed to be developed in educational planning for students with prescriptive planning and continuous assessment built into these methodologies.
6. Greater responsibility for monitoring educational aspects of the resource room program should be delegated to the Director of Special Education and the role responsibilities of the director and the building principal in supervising the program should be more clearly delineated.
7. The team was impressed with the high quality of staff concern for basic human care, love and attention and by the high quality of the physical

setting of the resource rooms in most of the schools.

We have spent considerable time during this school year discussing these seven points. Our discussions have included the Education Committee of the Board of Education, the district administrative staff, and the Educational Development Committee, a teacher committee composed of one teacher from each of our schools. In general, all of these groups found the PASS evaluation to be a fair and useful picture of the strengths and weaknesses of our program.

In five of the seven areas above, we have initiated steps to improve the program. We have held continuing discussions of the philosophy of "normalization" to replace labels with more humane descriptions, to focus on the child rather than on the disability. We have developed more precise guidelines for the quality of prescriptive planning and teaching that we expect from our resource specialists. We have begun to work with our resource room staff to implement the concept of "pre-teaching." We have clarified the roles and responsibilities of our director of special education and our building principals.

In two areas, we have been unwilling or unable to implement the PASS recommendations. In terms of inservice, Project Mainstream was not refunded for the 1975-76 school year; the district is therefore without special funds to implement mandatory inservice activities for district staff members. We are however attempting to gear our total inservice program toward the upgrading of instructional competence. We have had good representation of both classroom teachers and specialists in these programs.

As to the appropriateness of the resource room model, we have discussed extensively the PASS recommendation that we broaden the variety of in-district options for special education students. We firmly believe that the resource room model is appropriate for the vast majority of students with learning or behavioral problems. At present we place those students who cannot succeed

in the classroom with resource room support in alternative school programs provided by our special education cooperative; we have less than 50 district students so placed. We do not feel we can financially or administratively afford to offer in-district classes for these students. The variety of their problems and the range of their ages do not make single district programs to meet their individual needs feasible at this time. Moreover, we feel a retreat from the resource room model is ill-advised at this point in the district's history.

The section of the PASS report noting "Other Considerations seemed less useful to us than that on Major Strengths and Weaknesses. Many of the recommendations here, dealing with such topics as the climate for research and an advocacy role in special education, seemed not appropriate to us as a public school district. We are however grateful that the report raised these ideas for our discussion of them has served to enlarge our perspective on the total field of service systems.

We greatly regret that Project Mainstream was not refunded for the 1975-76 school year. Refunding would have enabled us to have a second PASS evaluation in April of this year. This second look at our program would have been invaluable as we endeavor to make improvements. We are convinced we are moving in the right direction and that all our students are benefitting from the "mainstreaming" process. Certainly they are beginning to view each other as individuals and not labels. One of our principals reported that a fourth grade student in her school complained recently that another student had run down the hall and bumped into him. "Who bumped you?" she asked. "I don't know his name," the youngster reported." "He's one of those kids who used to be retarded last year but now he's in the sixth grade."

In conclusion, I want to share with you our committment to integration in its broadest sense. Our children are learning together in a desegregated setting. We believe that it doesn't matter how kids get to school so long

as the classroom at the end of the bus ride is a humane and stimulating environment. For those of you who have read in the newspapers that bussing is bad and desegregation doesn't work, come to District 163. We think that it's working just fine. And while you're there, look carefully at the faces in the classroom. Like us, I suspect you won't be able to pick out the children who used to be isolated in special education classrooms but who are now part of our mainstream.

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